

American Foundation for the Blind Director of Research

Advocating for 32 million blind and visually impaired Americans, the American Foundation for the Blind seeks a results-driven Director of Research and a proven manager who can supervise a team of researchers in the development of research to inform AFB's public policy agenda and direct research projects related to AFB's mission and strategy.

BACKGROUND

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) mobilizes leaders, advances understanding, and champions impactful policies and practices using research and data. As publisher of the [Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness](#) for over a century and counting, AFB is also proud to steward the accessible [Helen Keller Archive](#), honoring the legacy of our most famous ambassador. AFB's mission is to expand pathways to leadership, education, inclusive technology, and career opportunities to create a world of no limits for people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision. To learn more, visit www.afb.org.

AFB has a long, proud history of removing barriers, ensuring inclusion, and creating positive change in the world for millions of people with vision loss. Founded in 1921 by M.C. Migel to serve blinded World War I veterans, AFB quickly expanded its mission to serve all Americans with vision loss. Helen Keller, the world-famous deafblind author and activist, joined the organization in 1924 and, with AFB, paved the way for significant social change in America.

Today, AFB uses its strengths and the "no limits" determination modeled by Ms. Keller to support blind or low vision people in employment, education, rehabilitation, community building, and advocacy.

Despite a century of progress, much work remains to ensure a level playing field for people who are blind or have low vision. Today's social and economic systems continue to produce and perpetuate staggering inequalities among people with vision loss, leading to higher levels of unemployment, increased isolation, lower graduation rates, and poverty. AFB is committed to creating a more inclusive and just society by mobilizing leaders and influencers, championing impactful policies and practices, and promoting understanding of the most effective drivers of change.

Headquartered in Arlington, VA, AFB is a largely virtual organization addressing issues with a national scope. AFB currently has a 38-member staff, 29% of whom are blind, visually impaired, or with other disabilities (including Dr. Kirk Adams, President & CEO), and an engaged, 19-member Board of Trustees. AFB's FY 22 operating budget is \$9.3 million.

BASIC FUNCTION

AFB's Public Policy and Research Institute educates stakeholders and advocates with policymakers in Congress and the Executive Branch to ensure Americans with vision loss have equal rights and opportunities to fully participate in society. The Director of Research (DOR) will oversee research at a truly world-class advocacy organization, building on the strengths of a well-known disability nonprofit by leading a motivated research team.

Reporting to the Chief Public Policy and Research Officer (CPPRO) and in collaboration with the dynamic President & CEO, whose talent as a visionary blind leader is well known, the person in

the Director of Research (DOR) position will direct and manage the formulation and implementation of AFB's research to inform AFB's public policy agenda and to direct research projects related to AFB's mission and strategy. Provide leadership, administrative oversight and staff supervision for the Research Department. Serve as senior advisor on research strategy and methodology. This is a full-time telecommuting position and/or there is also the opportunity to work out of AFB's Arlington headquarters. The DOR oversees a staff of two (2) researchers and leads a staff of volunteer researchers which includes doctoral students and university professors.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of Research will have the following major responsibilities:

- **Provides strategic leadership and direction** for the proposal, development, and execution of research projects including (but not limited to) scientific and policy research, demographic studies, and program evaluation. Ensures that research design meets the standards for professional publication and positions AFB as an authority on issues related to employment, education, and aging of individuals who are blind or have low vision. Offers expert guidance to cross-organizational staff undertaking research-related activities.
- **Serves as a leading AFB spokesperson**, communicating data and research findings both orally and in writing for lay and professional audiences (this may include offering Congressional testimony or comments on proposed regulations). Educates other stakeholders, including but not limited to blindness service professionals, employers, educators, HR executives, technology developers and IT managers. Serves as primary respondent to demographic and related information requests, coordinating communication of responses with the Public Policy and Research and other AFB groups and departments.
- **Presents original research and research-based knowledge** through public presentations, discipline-specific seminars, professional peer-reviewed publications, and consultation. Provides leadership for the design and delivery of research-related sessions and roundtable activities at AFB and other sponsored events and via the Internet to foster discussion, debate, and information sharing. Identifies and promotes partnership opportunities for conducting and disseminating research.
- **Supervises staff**, adhering to AFB's policies and practices regarding recruitment and orientation; communicating expectations, policies, information, goals, mission, and strategy; supporting staff in areas of job responsibilities, problem resolution, and benefits; identifying and supporting their professional development opportunities; ensuring policies and procedures compliance; and addressing areas requiring improvement and opportunities rewards and recognition. Develops and implements research internship and volunteer programs. Oversees interns, volunteers, and contractors.
- **Participates with Public Policy and Resource Development teams to research and identify potential federal, state, and private funding sources for AFB research.** Working closely with PPRI and Resource Development, writes grant proposals and manages outside-funded projects (federal, state, or private), helping to advance

and implement AFB's research grants as assigned. Serves as principal investigator and/or provides guidance to research staff serving as principal investigator for AFB-administered research grants. Serves as grant peer reviewer for federal agencies as appropriate and assigned.

- **Works closely with the CPPRO to develop, support and coordinate Policy and Research functions within the Public Policy and Research Institute**, including supporting the Public Policy and Research Institute Advisory Committee and the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness Editorial Advisory Board Committee to the AFB Board of Trustees. Attends advisory committee meetings to present information and answer questions. Drafts plans that need review and approval by our Institutional Review Board (IRB) related to AFB research activities.
- **Maintains professional development** in his or her discipline, research techniques, and social and policy issues affecting people and services in the vision loss and disability fields to integrate the "state of the art" into AFB's research efforts.
- **Carries out various administrative and intra-organizational collaboration responsibilities**, including developing and implementing departmental performance plan objectives and budgets, participating in tactical meetings and other AFB committees and working groups, communicating information and vision through the department and organization, and ensuring departmental compliance with all AFB policies and procedures.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

In addition to being a mission-driven individual with a belief in and commitment to AFB's work and objectives, candidates should have the following type of experience and qualifications:

- Doctoral degree in public policy, public administration or other social science, education, public health, information science, or disability-related field, with an emphasis on conducting disability-related research.
- A minimum of 5 years of professional work in the candidates' subject matter expertise or equivalent (that includes professional peer-reviewed publication) required. Advanced experience in research design, experience using mixed methods research, policy analysis and supervisory experience required. Experience disseminating research results through academic publications, written reports and public presentations to inform policy and program development.
- Must possess demonstrable professional/academic proficiency in research methods and policy analysis (including proficiency with SPSS/SAS and related analytical and scientific software). Knowledge of and experience in blindness, vision loss or disability research and studies required.
- Demonstrated exceptional speaking and writing skills including the ability to present at venues such as conferences, seminars, trainings and staff meetings.
- Experience supervising a team and ability to manage multiple competing priorities and projects simultaneously in a fast-paced environment under deadlines necessary.
- A history of successfully integrating DEI priorities into the workplace;

- Must embrace and role model AFB's mission and Core Values of Learning, Excellence, Collaboration and Impact.
- Must be a team player with a commitment to communicating and coordinating internally to achieve greatest organizational outcomes.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate should be:

- A mission-driven individual with a belief in and commitment to blindness and low vision, other disabilities, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and employment equity issues.
- A team builder – confident and competent, with strong skills in management and leadership; one who understands the subtleties of motivating and directing a diverse group of personalities with different work styles;
- A good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources, and able to analyze and formulate disparate information into a sound, well-organized plan;
- Intrepid yet tactful; determined yet respectful of others' concerns; someone with the flexibility and creativity needed to find alternative ways to reach research and policy objectives when barriers arise; a skilled negotiator who does not drive themselves or others into a corner;
- A hard worker with a high energy level; a "doer" with a willingness to work hands-on in developing and executing a variety of research and development activities;
- Emotionally mature with a very good sense of humor and the flexibility and sensitivity to work with diverse personalities and situations.

For more information please contact:

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At AFB we do not just accept difference, we celebrate it. AFB is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate based upon race, religion, color, national origin, gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, status as a protected veteran, status as an individual with a disability, or other applicable legally protected characteristics.

If you need assistance or an accommodation due to a disability, you may contact Human Resources at hr@afb.org.